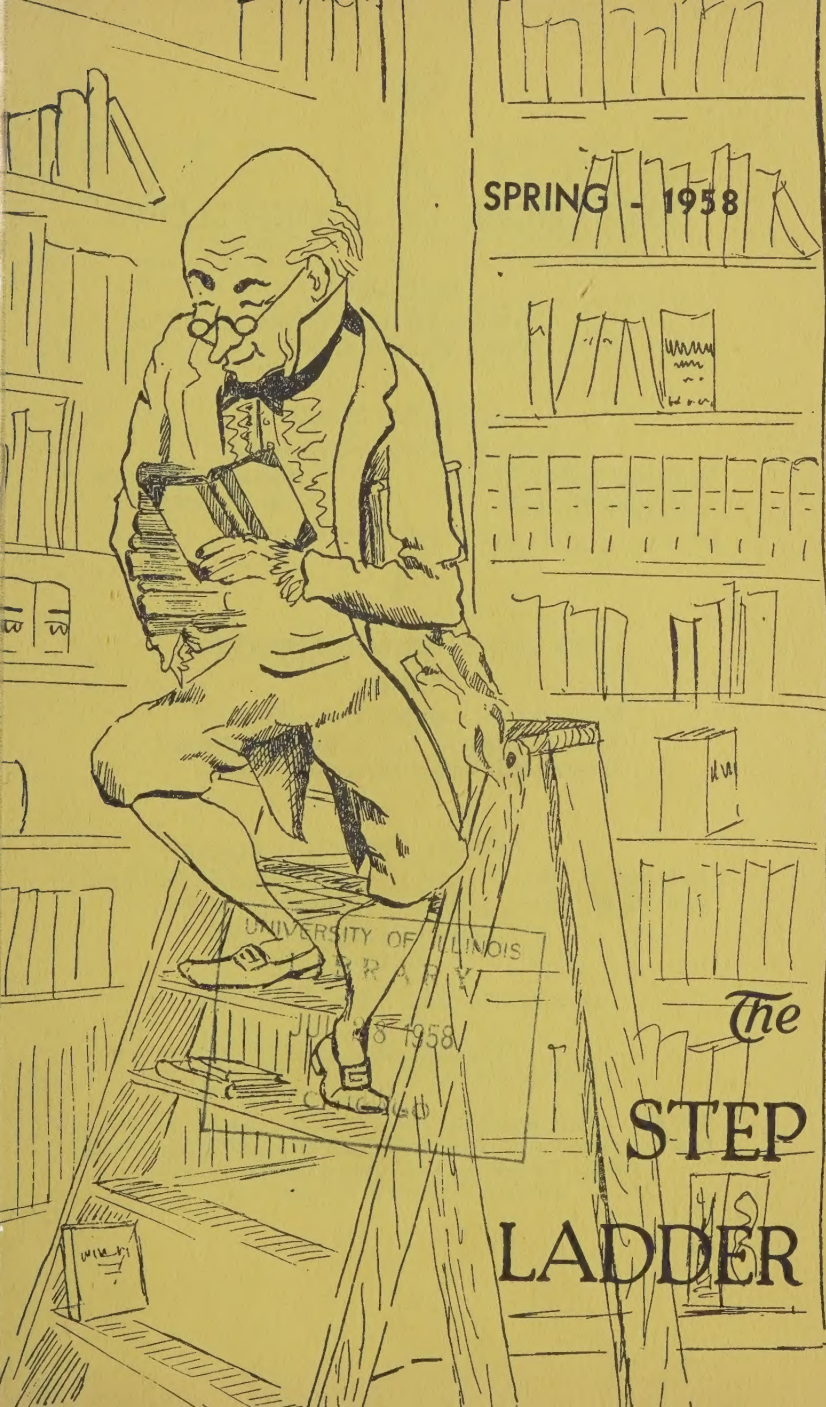


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The STEP LADDER

Tolerance, good temper and sympathy — they are what matter really, and if the human race is not to collapse they must come to the front before long.

— E. M. FORSTER, *Two Cheers for Democracy*.

VOL. 41, No. 4

SPRING 1958

GALESBURG, ILLINOIS

Grove Becker
Box 566
Pebble Beach, California

CANYON

Lean wings circle hunger
under the cliff
slow through enormous mist, dark
over the chaparral

The blades glitter wider spirals
through the late slant sun.
The watcher's ribs tighten
cruelly for the skillful glide,
mortal dive, the bloody
brief scream against death.

The hawk flies home unsatisfied.
The keen watcher, remembering hunger,
subtly regrets escape.

Stanton A. Coblentz
Box 332
Mill Valley, California

EARLY MORNING STROLL

The clouds were ragged-shouldered, gray with rain
The half-moon, through an oval clearing, glowed
Over tall ridges where the trees' dark stain
Surmounted a canyon opposite my road.
There, in a morning shadow-world, I strayed,
Watching the mighty vapors furl and form,
Blue-rifted, and rose-bordered, and arrayed
In slaty jackets of the approaching storm.

I lifted my arms; and from the flowing sky
A beauty close to prayer looked down on me,
And the weird thought that I, and only I
Of all man's multitudes, was here to see.
And then I knew all beauty, shy of wing,
Dwells like a bird apart, a lonely thing.

ANNIVERSARY

Out of the pit of forty-seven years
You call again; your form and face grow dim,
But still a lingering music that endears
Throbs in a holy twilight interim.

And though the shadows veil your lids and cheeks,
Now like an angel hovering near but high,
Deep in the dark the love you kindled speaks
As oracle of the Self that cannot die.

Bernice Ames
12223 Dunoon Lane
Los Angeles 49, California

LETTER HOME FROM COLLEGE

If I write of the weather it may be because
tornadoes have loosened the lashed places of love,
have stirred billows of doubt
to fog the glistening picture I would send you.
More land has surrendered to sea,
more islands washed away.
Clouds object in their white way
but nothing shakes the breathless heat.

If night stretches the written lines apart
the fragrance of distance has taken me.
Constant companions, unmentioned,
cause a landslide of thought; watch out below
where evergreens bend and weave out of focus.
Bright words with perspective elude me
to brood, adrift and uncertain.
Patience will lift you above my report of the weather.

SPLASH

Leaving the world of white air
a diver shatters the sun-surface;
rain of jewels, chips of light
follow thought into deed.

From the blue water world
sound splinters, frays like pleasure;
fringes of splash
shrug the sky's imposition of color.

Space, filled and emptied with no perceptible change,
satin with light, sundered by heat,
shouts for the diver
to shatter the glass again.

Laura Eliza Bliven
319 West 94th Street
New York 25, New York

MANHATTAN PASTRY

(For the Artist's Birthday)

Do you who sip a Roman wind tonight
Recall the sea-wined air that pranks these streets?
Or see again the spun-steel lace that meets
To bind the rock-stayed earth to streams, with light
That strains against the dusk's voluptuous breast
And strives to mock the stars? Or smell the rain
That spills gem-bright to satined streets like grain
That sprouts in loamy soil and flings its crest
A barricade athwart the deathly dark?
To you who shrewdly gauge our need and sow
Wry seeds of mirth and love and tears to spark
Our dreams and green our ways with peace, how show
The homage due unless our city mark
Your day to set her taper towers a-glow?

FOR AN ARTIST LOVER, DEAD

The strong and sculptured beauty of your hands
Is flakes of ash upon the winds of time;
The subtle touch of fingertips but pain
Recalled by this too valid flesh that cries
To be at one with yours, unnamed as sands
Along a tidal beach. Yet I shall mime
A thirst for breath, and pray your saints to gain
Some grains of warmth from all the sunlit skies
That you are not to share — except as heart
And mind retain some stain of ego-earth:
So unheard melodies shall sound on ears
That hear as yours; the pageantry of art
Unfold before your eyes; and all the mirth
In you be poured from me through sunless years.

Robert Wood Clack
209 West Downie
Alma, Michigan

DESERT WITCHCRAFT

Whispers wake the east horizon;
Sleepy stars wink out once more;
Dawn creeps coyly down the dune sides;
Sun sprites dance on desert floor,
Chasing shadows from dry canyons,
Staining sagebrush greenish gray;
Cactus casts fantastic figures —
Purples etched on tawny clay!

Pastel panoramas alter;
Thunderheads cool off the sun;
Sudden showers veil vivid vistas
With a misty monotone.
Cloudrifts — then reechoed rainbows
Arch across cliff tops and sky;
Freshets fade from choked-up channels,
Barren rocks too soon drain dry!

Rainbow wraiths dissolve in silence;
Eerie twilight ghosts descend;
Furtive phantoms of the desert
Melt to mystical black sand.
Hung above far mountain ramparts,
Never stars more steely bright.
Magic moods bewitch the desert —
Spellbound day! enchanting night!

Matthew Fitzsimon
52, Aubert Park
London, N. 5, England

PASTORAL SONGS
TO
LILITH

INISH FAIL

O, here unchanging yet is the piper-light,
It's the piper-light of Inish Fail;
And who has heard that many a tune has brought
Calm to dreams returning to be real.

So sure as seeing all the morning wearing
Its best golden coat, and clouds become
Great scarlet folds, and the sun's arms daring,
Caring to splash in fields and fells, the same

As the piper-light who comes to Inish Fail
For whom the waters call, and here who shall sing
At the sight and sound of the piper, piping still;
O for the light to the heart of everything.

THE DAY-DOWN HOUR

In the goodnight of the sun
He runs with a fine comb
Through the red hair of clouds,
Through yellow curls and white locks;
And sweeping up like a wave of the sea,
Binding and winding down
In a dance that is the last of day,
Away, O, passing away,
Waving and leaving the trails of light
To a shooting star of beginning night.

THE LANTERN

Go may the glow of the lantern there
In the path between rocks, the island round,
Green pools, where silver eels make rainbows rare;
Here an otter sleepless on land may find
A worm in gold, but the glow behind.

LILITH

It is the heart within the diamond light I know,
Full of the streams of beams afar, but dear,
And I never saw a cloud that could make a ghost of light
Whenever she came like the sun on fields and hills;
No sorrow's wind behind the shadows could leap straight
Across waters to chase wild airs like bells
So far away, yet never as sad as Echo,
Where Narcissus saw the reflection of a star.

Marion V. Burling
4450 33rd Street
San Diego 16, California

BRUSH MAGIC

Artist, tell me, how do you paint the eye?
How do you capture on your canvas there
The wonderment of childhood, or the cry
Of loneliness, the holy light of prayer?
Share with me your secret, show me, painter,
What stroke of color or what touch of light,
Softer than wing of moth, translucent, fainter,
Portrays the soul's high noon or its deep night?
You have your tools to make the meaning clear —
Palette, paint, and brush — no more, no less;
The outlines for two eyes before you here,
To fill with rage, despair or tenderness.
Catching a magic look that sings or cries,
Painter, how do you paint a pair of eyes?

Emory C. Pharr
5704 8th Road, N.
Arlington 5, Virginia

ON GOING BACK

Look closely at the old home neighborhood.
Cracked shades keep aureate light from rugs dust mired
In ageing houses touching for support.
Pale pride peeps from these alleys worn and tired

For in these houses once dwelt first warm love.
In one Gloom died when Faith and Joy were wed.
In one a stormy winter's day found rest.
Another knew pure truth when knowledge fled.

The sparrows which once ate pre-eaten scraps
Left in the streets by passing mule and horse
Now fight for grass seeds on the balding lawns
And pick the bugs from once young live-oak corse.

You thought, sir, that you could go back and find
A house sun-washed, a tree sun-bright with dew.
There is no going back because the thing
You would go back to went away with you.

SOLDIERS' HOME

They sit on benches on the green lawn's swell
And search the map of memory, other days;
These ancient warriors who know powder's smell,
Who know the sound of guns and bugle lays
And pound of wave on steel and planes they flew.
There was a war with Spain, then three more wars.
One tells of his grandfather who wore the blue.
One had an uncle under stars and bars.
They talk of those once here but are not now.
One tells about an ill friend dear to him
And of a woman, dark, who smoothed his brow.
The light of labor, love, and hate is dim.
The peace which they did not go out to meet
Has come to them on gray and gentle feet.

Mary E. Caragher
224 Dartmouth Street
Rochester, New York

AS ONCE IN ENGLAND

The swan-cry of the long twilight pierces chaos
In this doomsday
Of winds, shrilling the branches
Of old oaks, stirring in wild Wessex.

King Alfred in his narrow tomb sleeps.
Yet barbarous hordes (you say)
Still storm the ramparts of our peace
And will not let us rest.

Patience. A morning will rise for the steadfast —
As once in England
There came that day when the Vikings, defeated,
Left Athelney, their bold banners snow-furled.

Helen Sue Isely
126 South Franklin Avenue
Ames, Iowa

AND NATIONS MARCH

Singing words are hollow little shells
Which clutch the echoed tones of all that's real;
The intermittent strains of bagatelles

Tie hope to little hope, and thus reveal
The reason men accept the minor chords,
And thirst and wait for larger truths to heal.

Hoarded words may chill the winged rewards,
For hearts must soar to be completely free . . .
And nations march behind their singing bards.

Ancient inspirations, currently
Conceived, now honeycomb the cultures feeding
On fear and hope of atomic-rhapsody.

When tyrants talk, terror goes stampeding . . .
Our singing faith can keep the world God-speeding.

George Dugan
Washington, New Hampshire

SPEED-DEMONS

Lapped by waves of sound
and light, space channel-buoys
mark Time. Proud challenge team
ascends, with tail agleam,
to flaunt its rocket noise.
Fast swish of mighty jet,
and shrieking, shattered shards
fall earthward: barriers crack,
as echoes wail lament —
light-years shrink into yards,
till just beyond the spent,
all things are black — jet black!

Now, Time alone contends:
rank, sulphured hell-fume chokes
the orbit track. Hope pends,
when ageless Time slowpokes
so far behind the race,
the Cross leapfrogs the Birth!
Quick Judge flags down the pace;
sets handicap for earth's
backfiring champion,
so Time — and Time again —
can spurt to win, and grin
at fright of flight in vain!

Douglas R. Empringham
1050 Fell Street, Apt. 14
San Francisco, California

LEVELS

Leaving the night-fires
 To kindle
In hearths of fallen trees
 And the bats
To conspire with their echoes

The stream slipped eastward
 Out of the marshes
Into the scattered
 Brigade of birches
Soundless as the coming of love

To hear the birds singing
 Songs like the flames
 Of cathedral candles
In their fragile agony to ascend.

Mary Boyd Wagner
321 East 43rd Street
New York, New York

SHARECROPPERS

I have no complaint about their work —
They are the very soul of industry,
As anyone who watches them can see.
But when I claim my portion of the crop
Which they have gathered, drop by golden drop,
Each member of their tacit suicide squad
Attempts to gore me with a poisoned dirk . . .
I should not blame them — *Honey is their god.*

William J. Noble
1566 Kearney
Denver, Colorado

THE DIPLOMAT

The diplomat who represented time
was formally correct. He did not wage
a vulgar war of words to urge his case,
nor discourse on the fallacies of age.

The image spiralled to an ebon crown
of powdered blackness. Needle points of pain
made agony the fountain of a light,
illumining a fever-pitted plain.

Dark petals drifted down to solitude.
A sound of silence shuddered in the air,
awakening an echo's lonely flight
within the dreary cadence of despair.

The diplomat who represented time
erased the weary vision from my mind,
releasing me to join in harmony
the ever-growing chorus of my kind.

SCOPE

If sound could rise, becoming one great shaft
of solid tone, unbearable to hear,
a shuddered cadence might unhinge the world,
transporting silence to another sphere.

If light could widen into brilliancy
of atom flares destructive to the eye,
a pencil ray might thrust a javelin
beyond the darkness of the furthest sky.

If sheer emotion could arouse the core
of surging power in the dormant brain,
a single feeling might become a root,
dispersing verdure on the arid plain.

Vera T. Marshall
417 Sanders Street
Franklin, Louisiana

MODERN MONA LISA

Being woman, and concerned with growth,
She is attuned to music varied as May leaves.

From within, spinners of new life
Hum deeply and in unison;
Through fingers in garden loam
Vibrate sustained chords of riven seed;
A rose widens with harmony
As haunting as a forgotten lullaby:
These silence the thunder of split atoms;
These still the whine of rockets bearing death.

Being woman, and concerned with growth,
Her eyes look beyond tomorrow, and smile,
As she listens to the ultimate song:
The many-voiced choir singing creation.

PARCHED SOULS

I pray for homeless old; for homeless young
Reaching, crying empty-mouthed among
Unkind, and kindly, strangers. Liberate,
I pray, the hands that, bound to hooded hate,
Draw a tighter noose in ropes of pain.
Grant repose to the ones who can't contain
Their fear within reverberating skulls
But scavenge waves of peace like raucous gulls.
I pray for each whose soul has parched in drouth,
Who holds the taste of ashes in his mouth.

Bonnie E. Parker
11551 Roxbury
Detroit 24, Michigan

EVEN SO DEEP A WOUND

Even so deep a wound
As this
Will heal itself
Given wind and rain
And the earth's slow turning
And the cool compress of stars.

Trust has been slain before
And the crystal-mooned
Sky has gone dead with grief.
But terrible though the scars
May be, they were not half
Enough to keep trust slain.
Always there is a flame
Burning, burning
With clean strong emphasis,
Waiting to rise once more.

I will heal again
And in the cycle of years
The time will be brief.
All I will need is strong
Locks on the gate of tears,
A secret name,
And song.

RELEASE

Lake is no word for this estranging sea
Flinging its fury on the stubborn shore.
White with their anger, waves claw out at me,
Standing where I have often stood before,
Drawn by the elemental pull and surge,
Seeking a thing my mind recalls in dark
Images of desire. What is this urge
Marking me with the strange indelible mark?

Out of the sea I came. I know this thing.
Out of the sea in some pale dawn of earth —
Here on the shore I stand remembering
Things I have known before the human birth

Fettered me to the land. This angry lake
Comes as an envoy seeking my release.
Lonely am I, until my heart could break,
Wanting the sea, the dark familiar peace!

BE SURE OF THIS

It is not easy for a hobbled tongue
To learn the way of freedom. It is not
A swift and undemanding thing to lift
The bars of long denial and to speak
With eager flow of phrase and syllable,
Spontaneous with joy and warmed with beat
And pound of the astonished heart that sends
The orators of love through every vein.

The years of silence build their prison well
And old familiar hurt sets stone on stone
Until the tower's walls become not harsh
Imprisonment alone, until they seem
Almost a haven where the wary stop
And view the urgent world, serenely safe
From every vivid moment that might press
Too keen a knife against the frightened heart.

It never is a simple joyous act
To fling the shutters outward and to lean
In ardent haste upon the heart's warm sill
To braid the blossoming words in chains of song
And place them like an honor at the throat
Of one who came to set the singer free.
The magic has been done, but still it is
No simple matter to unloose the birds.

Be patient with my stumbling efforts now,
And do not turn away because I seem
Reluctant to confess this wonder, grown
So terrible and bright it strikes me mute
Beyond the muteness fear and silence built.
If I am slow to speak, be sure of this —
My love is such, I tremble and would sing
My heart to bursting petals for your joy.

Ella Elizabeth Preston
1322 East Twelfth Street
Davenport, Iowa

GRASS

It is strange to see tame grass,
trimmed to rich, emerald beauty,
clipped like a carpet's nap,
lying, a royal rug, between respectful
borders,
alyssum, geranium, lily.

Turn back the pages of time till these cropped
hills
wear neither streets, nor lanes, nor avenues;
not mansion, ranch house, bungalow, or
simple cottage;

Wigwams there were, perhaps, rising from
the tall and tassled grass — vast seas of grass,
bowing obediently before each passing wind.

Here you shall see Ojibway, Fox, Sioux — their lances
feather tipped, their sleek braids hanging down —
crossing, in separate bands, the enormous plains
which lie between the brown western streams and
the blue Father of Waters. Their ponies, slender,
fleet, speed easily with slightest touch of guidance.

Or turn yet one more page to days preceding history.
Here come the Mound Builders, two, by two, by two,
moving slowly over these same plains in endless
migration.
They bring bone needles, beads, crude pottery, and
baskets of corn — small grains, and many colored —
but wealth untold for tribesmen.

They live, and worship, and are gone. No record
left except their buried bones, crisscrossed in
a huge clay hill which now the grass is hiding.
Whither? Whence? And When?
No man can tell you?

Ah, Grass! You have persisted though cultures
have come and gone. You have prevailed a
thousand, thousand ages, and marched on.

When ranch house, temple, and mart have crumbled to
decay; when men no longer clip your blades
to carpet softness, even then your deathless
stems shall inherit our lovely earth.

Corinne Sherman
Les Trois Couronnes
Vevey, Switzerland

NAVAHO GIRL

She shows warm-skinned
Against the desert plain
In the relentless glory
Of the sun.
Around her neck and wrists
Are turquoise bands.

No sapphire sea
Nor opalescent sky,
No bluebells by a lane
Her heritage.
Only these dull stones set
By tribal hands.

Like these she sheds
No flash to answer light,
Her tint alone admits
The constant glare.
Secret, impervious,
And smooth she stands.

L. Radsliff
2511 Regent Street
Berkeley 4, California

TICK — TOCK

Chairs reflect the time
 even as a clock.
There were the lovely walnut curves
and then those jig-saw cuts
 spoiling dark wood.
High knobs arose from golden oak.
Soon there came a sad grim time of mission —
 no matin bell relieved the gloom.
Now, black wires hold cloth to fit
 our curves — strange company for marble top.
Chairs reflect the time, only those
 who use them never change.
Tick — tock. Tick — tock.

NEW WORLDS FOR OLD

An old mother huddled by the quay
where Nana dropped her anchor,
 hearing joyous cries, seeing wild men
 led ashore, begged.
A careless sailor tossed her yellow corn
 instead of gold.

A small boy wormed his way
 into a group around the globe
 under a great glass dome.
Their startled minds united at his cry,
 "Daddy, may I go too, I want to see the moon,
 I have a mask."

SPAN OF TIME

Between my life as worker, wife and mother
and what we call, old age, there
is a span of time.

I will not dribble it in idle tasks,
useless words, or in vain memory.
I will dredge far and wide, furnishing those
empty rooms within my life, whose doors
I had not time to open, with color, sound
and light, until myself is singing
in a furnished house.

Between the ends of life there
is a precious span of life.

A TRIBUTE

This thing you are —
that lights the flame I live by;
This thing your are —
has turned me back into the streets of life.

This thing you do to me —
It is not love,
for I knew that radiance, in other times and places.
You lift the self we call a mind above the drag,
of hand or foot
There is a shimmer on both dreams and words.
Each task I touch with swift dispatch, and turn to seek
cool hills of thought;
In dim sweet caves I find a varicolored shade,
defending me from hidden fears.

There is a new day, since this thing you are
Has touched the thing I was, and am no more.

LIGHT

Along a crowded street
a child tugged at my skirt,
a woman begged — "let's talk
awhile."

On my return I tried to see
if I could find, what in my
face encouraged them. It
seemed
that there was little there: dim
eyes,
a sagging cheek, gray hair, and
then,
I saw it was my love!

My love still shining through
the years;
and they were warmed, and I
am glad,
to be the holder of such light.

Ruth Young Fischer
573 Santa Rosa Avenue
Berkeley 7, California

TE DEUM

The Summer meadows veer October-wise . . .
Deep-rouged sumac flanks each road and fence,
Tall trees and vines blaze tones that dramatize
The weathered houses and old mills. Incense
Curls from russet mounds and filters through
The vivid roof of oak and maple trees.
Bands of gypsy scarlets hold rendezvous
In Persian woods, and gaudy tapestries
Of copper and cerise on hilltops rove
Obliquely down ravines and tangled brakes.
Fresh-mown fields in evening's shimmering mauve
By moonlight, slowly turn to silver lakes.

Through stubble land and tawny teepee shocks,
Echoes the song of harvest equinox.

Rockwell B. Schaefer
Room 307, 1501 Broadway
New York 36, New York

WOODCUTS
THE FAMINE FIELDS

Moon water trembles silently
Along the dark amorphous slopes
Where twist the famine fields of night
And gathers phantoms from the naked seeds of dreams.

Somewhere far below, a teasing path
Unechoed and untrod
Crow-footed, idles to a sodden pool
That slowly warps in stifling loneliness.

Immobile toads with pebble eyes
And gasping, mud-gilled fish
Uncertain of their images
Stare into mocking vagueness of reflected sleep.

A fissure spreads
Along the frescoed murals in the flaking mind,
Smug-hardened by complacent winds,
Until some unseen whistling shrew alights.

At last a blister bursts the tightened skin
And through the clammy bottom of the pool of solitude
Moonwater trembles
Rising on the mists of dawn.

LOVE BARGAINING

The shutters of my little alcove bar the sun.
I sit in shadows trembling at my mother's touch.
She combs and brushes my unbraided hair
And scents it with the oil of poppy-seeds and myrrh.
She kneads a blushing warmth into my frigid cheeks.
My lips are crimsoned with the tint of pomegranate rind.
A wetted charcoal stick lines blackened curves above my eyes.
My mother ties the flowered sash, to hold my festive gown.
Its tightness grips the throbbing of my heart
As through the lacquered screens
I hear the beggared pleading of my father's voice
And haggling barter of the go-between.

LAMENT

My former Lord — a noble Samurai
Rides by my lonely, shabby house.
His horse is richly draped;
The saddle trimmed with gold and pearls.
His silver helmet glints with studded gems.
His sword belt is of ivory and jade.

I know he will not enter here,
For now, my dower chests, that once were treasure-full,
Are cracked and bare.
Though many years he shared my scented couch
My barren love had brought no fruit.

Behind him on a milk white horse
With veils of precious thread and richly gowned
And tended by a slavish retinue,
She proudly sits, his new and pregnant wife.

Charles Shaw
340 East 57th Street
New York 22, New York

OF LATE

Of late
we have grown indifferent
to the wonder of the now
and look upon life's miracles
dull-eyed,
ignoring, in our daily stride,
the magic of the moon,
the sun, the stars,
the sky, the sea,
the whisper of the wind.
Of late
we have locked the door on life
and thrown away the key;
we even take our dearest friends
for granted.

TO KNOW BEFORE

To know before the knowing is too late,
to feel before the zest to feel is gone,
to understand and heartfully forgive
the fragrances that itch the inner bone.

To see and in the seeing to perceive
the undiminished wonder of the years,
to love and in the loving to ascend
above those broken hopes that float in tears.

Annie P. Thomas
The Hopkins Apartments
3100 St. Paul Street
Baltimore 18, Maryland

CURVED TESTAMENT

Nature finds need to bring unspoken testament to truth:
 All beauty compensates by curves:
Trees, springing, tall, from unpremeditated youth,
 soon register dissatisfaction, with relief,
content to carry burdens, dropped to limbs
 arrived maturity, by weight of fruit or leaf.

No river challenges impediment of rock,
 but finds deflecting circuit for its voice
a gracious folding with the sea — by seeming choice,
 time-serving cushioned rest for gulls, who swerve
in patterns so oblique, to implement a whole —
 one questions how they ever reach their goal!

Only man — egoist — to re-affirm, as real,
 an old pronouncement — "Shortest distance won,
derives from line, unswerving, run
 from point to point," will devastate
his undulating fields and forests, laying straight,
 highway's monotony, beside his rail of steel!

THREE TERRORS

Not as approach of Jungle Cat
evokes submission from root-grass or vine's
unwilling silence bound "accessory" to crime —
nor hawk, though failing of the padded paw,
as quietly can match quick dying by its
co-related claw —

Mark menace subtler, I will give you guide —
no habits indexed, and no patterned pride,
lies dormant, nor subsists on drink or food,
but waits upon a proper soil wooed,
to move, in shade, uncanny, formless, cold —
Defenseless — shadow-boxing with slow
strangle-hold, disguised by camouflage
in coward's dress —
some name it "Loneliness"!

Margaret Evelyn Singleton
30 Mount Pleasant Street
Winchester, Massachusetts

NO ONE LAUGHS

Intellect would hold infinities apart:
the microscopic seen, dwindling to formulæ,
and the telescopic known, disappearing into equation.
No one laughs, although stars twinkle brighter sometimes,
for atom cores and astral circumferences
do seem unequal for linking on one chain of thought,
and an Einstein is a mental rarity.

POETRY

She lured me into cavern depth,
Into the heart of earth
Where mystery in the dark has slept
Since eons gave slow birth
To subterranean splendor, wept
Slow tears of mineral girth.

Her laughter was the sunken stream
To ascertain pursuit;
It echoed through the cavern dream
And dared a song be mute
About her joy, or make it seem
Less musical than a lute.

I lost her for an age or two
And roamed the narrow land
Of mount and canyon, passing through
Rock visions with a hand
Unworthy to recreate the view
Of sunken sea and strand.

Her siren voice became my guide
Once more as faint but clear
It led me to the outer side
Of earth while, she, demure,
Made full escape in flight to hide
From seekers of allure.

Mary Ormsbee Whitton
Box 108, Route 2
Pound Ridge, New York

MUSIC TILL DAWN

In the hospital's bleak small hours,
I heard America singing.

"nothing but love, baby
nothing but love,
and I just gotter have that man. . . . "

"No, no, no,
I'm blue, I'm low,
Let me go, let me go . . . "

"Cheep, cheep, peep, peep.
Send me some money, honey
So I can go home to you . . . "

"Love me maybe, that's my baby,
Someone to hold my hand. . . .
Icky, ticky, wicky, sticky
Tutti frutti, tutti frutti . . .
roll and rock, rock and roll. . . . "

"Nights now are awful lonely
That's why I'm blue,
Send me some money, honey
So I can go home to you . . . "

America singing, God help us.
Then in a winter dawn
The stretchers start rolling
Down the corridor.

Helen J. Waterhouse
4515 South 9th Street
Tacoma 6, Washington

NO NARROW BED

Sea ways are different. . . .
Tears must fall . . . yet grief is wide in scope,
And those who love the Sea, lie down at sea,
To dream in halls dim-hung with heliotrope.
With white Sea-grapes for swaying canopy.
Here Seamen sleep. . . . A restless breed of men
Born with the salt of sea in pulse and heart . . .
And every wide-rolled bed beyond our ken
Rocked endlessly . . . and bells toll time apart.
Sea ways are different. . . .
Here Seamen dream in vast assembly room . . .
O lightly sleep, keyed to the morning call;
Here, boundary lines are curved to bear the bloom
Remembering-ones keep fresh with heart-tear fall.
Sea ways are different. . . .
Sleep, Seamen, sleep . . . yet lightly wear the dream;
The watchman keepeth watch on His bright shore;
The bo'sun stands to pipe dawn's radiant beam. . . .
Beyond the curve of sleep, night is no more.

TO SULPHUR SPRINGS ON VANCOUVER ISLAND

On wild Vancouver Island . . . Ocean-faced,
The sea has channeled passages as tight
As eye-in-needle . . . Narrows finely laced
By tidal currents whorling into bight.

By Bamfield's Growler . . . Sailorman, beware.
Lay long to north'ard of the funnel rock
That spawns the hissing "boil"; I have been there
And heard the howl . . . the roar-back . . . rode the shock.

By winding salt-chuck tracered far inland,
We traversed easy waters tinted of Sea,
Yet tied with cedars . . . scent with piny frond;
We raced through rocky chasms, driving free.

In cold Pacific's violence, wave on wave
Around the bastioned Islet-stationed light,
We sniffed the "sulphur-course"; In Refuge Cove
We hooked with alien odors, Sea in sight.

HOT . . . The high steam-curtained rock-lined pool
Spilled in staircase pockets down the slide,
And half-way . . . Ocean-splattered, I the fool,
Naked, challenged the wind . . . and the rising tide.

TRAIL TO THE HOT SPRINGS

Dedicated to Ivan H. Clarke

We who come later, finding The Trail well laid
With split-cedar shakes over sturdy axe-felled logs
Braced belly deep on the mouths of the sucking bogs,
Are blessing the man who came . . . who saw . . . who stayed. . . .

Steep slides were tempered and planed with lusty strokes
Chopped into rockbound earth by a woodsman's hand;
Gorges were spider-bridged . . . and peel-pole spanned
With handrail holds for the timid town bred folks.

Winding a crooked way through the hemlock and fern . . .
Bending to shore-shelf, cliff-side and cedar bole . . .
Up "Jacob's ladder" (perhaps for the good of my soul)
I hurry with wild free footsteps . . . slowly return.

Only the growing green of the bush and the berry . . .
Only the creeping root in the cushioned earth,
Know how my blood boiled bubbles of primitive mirth . . .
How my heart kept begging my swinging limbs to tarry.

Spruce and cedar were tangy, with scent that clings . . .
Were hushed as a Holy Place by an ancient sea;
Then the ridge-wind foisted a foreign breath on me,
Hot with the alien smell of the sulphur springs.

Sally A. Thompson
4566 Aragon Drive
San Diego 15, California

THE EVIL EYE

Possessed with his own importance
the man considered himself shrewd
for his position denoted prestige
in his official drama
interviewing many men each day
from every phase of intellectual score.
He was proud of his eyes,
though one of them was an artificial orb.

A stranger requested a loan
to meet his urgent need.
The business magnate questioned him
as to his collateral
which was considered insufficient.
The voice in command, said,
if you point to my false eye
you may obtain the money you desire.

The dependent man chose
correctly, for it seemed to him that one
held a glint of human kindness!

May Smith White
508 Arkansas Avenue
Monroe, Louisiana

WITH COMING SPRING

The quietness of each day grows deep and strong,
Like sacred dreams that lie within the past —
Each bird, aware, holds back his gayest long,
Seeming to know the recent ones will last
To echo memories in hearts of those
Who heard his lilting ecstasy of sound,
While dew was clinging to the budding rose —
And life was throbbing in the yielding ground.

Although each coming spring will be the same,
Still yet I wait to see a special sign;
Like flowering quince that burns with eager flame;
For then I know cold winter must resign.
As spring keeps promise with each bud and flower,
I, too, would know the gladness of this hour!

BOOKFELLOW NOTES:

- With the Summer, 1958, issue, THE STEP LADDER will discontinue the practice of printing the addresses of its contributors. Anyone who wishes to correspond with a poet appearing in our pages may do so by addressing him in care of the editor of THE STEP LADDER, and we will gladly forward the letter.
- The Poets and Patrons Annual Poetry Contest for 1958 has been announced and is open to residents of the Chicago area (50 mile radius). The deadline is September 1, 1958. Write to Thelma Mary Howard, 1611 West 54th Street, La Grange, Illinois, for contest rules.

- The following STEP LADDER poems have been reprinted: Marguerite W. Truslow, "Unpublished Item," *New York Herald Tribune*, June 30, 1957. Helen Harrington, "TV Jungle," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 13, 1958, and *Best Articles and Stories*, May, 1958. Paula Nelson, "Separate Journeys," *Best Articles and Stories*, May, 1958. "No Return," *Best Articles and Stories*, April, 1958. Samuel M. Sargent, "Wagon Train," *New York Herald Tribune*, June 1, 1958.

BOOKS RECEIVED:

- Dan Andersson, *The Last Night in Paindalen*, translated by Caroline Schleeft, 2 West 67th Street, New York 23, New York.
- Jimm Dakin, *Giant and the Beetle*, Durham Chapbook XIII, Volume Two, American Weave Press, 4109 Bushnell

Road, University Heights 18, Ohio. \$1.00.

- *International Who's Who in Poetry*, to be published in four parts over a period of two years. The Cranbrook Tower Press, Bach House, 10-12 Baches Street, London, N. 1, England. \$1.50.

THE STEP LADDER CONTRIBUTORS FOR SPRING 1958

Grove Becker	1	Canyon
Stanton A. Coblentz	2	Early Morning Stroll
	2	Anniversary
Bernice Ames	3	Letter Home
	3	Splash
Laura Eliza Bliven	4	Manhattan Pastry
	4	For An Artist Lover
Robert Wood Clack	5	Desert Witchcraft
Matthew Fitzsimon	6	Inish Fail
	6	The Day-Down Hour
	7	The Lantern
	7	Lilith
Marion V. Burling	7	Brush Magic
Emory C. Pharr	8	On Going Back
	8	Soldiers' Home
Mary E. Caragher	9	As Once in England
Helen Sue Isely	9	And Nations March
George Dugan	10	Speed-Demons
Douglas R. Empringham	11	Levels
Mary Boyd Wagner	11	Sharecroppers
William J. Noble	12	The Diplomat
	12	Scope
Vera T. Marshall	13	Modern Mona Lisa
	13	Parched Souls
Bonnie E. Parker	14	Even So Deep a Wound
	14-15	Release
	15	Be Sure of This
Ella Elizabeth Preston	16-17	Grass
Corinne Sherman	17	Navaho Girl
L. Radsliff	18	Tick-Tock
	18	New Worlds for Old
	19	Span of Time
	19	A Tribute
	20	Light
Ruth Young Fischer	20	<i>Te Deum</i>
Rockwell B. Schaefer	21	The Famine Fields
	22	Love Bargaining
	22	Lament
Charles Shaw	23	Of Late
	23	To Know Before
Annie P. Thomas	24	Curved Testament
	25	Three Terrors
Margaret Evelyn Singleton	25	No One Laugh
	26	Poetry
Mary Ormsbee Whitton	27	Music Till Dawn
Helen J. Waterhouse	28	No Narrow Bed
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